

THE BEAUTY OF THE MASS—11 and 12

You will notice, the priest wears **special garments or vestments for Mass.**

The first vestment that the priest may put on is the **amice**, a rectangular piece of white linen, worn beneath the alb. It is optional.

The next vestment that that priest puts on for the Mass is the **alb**. The alb is the long white garment that the priest wears underneath the other vestments. The word “*alb*” comes from the Latin word “*albus*,” meaning “*white*.” The alb was an everyday garment in the Roman world. It symbolizes the garment in which Christ was clothed by Herod, and the purity of the soul with which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass should be offered.

The priest celebrant also may use a **cincture**. A cincture is a cord or rope (either white or the color of the day) that is used to gather the alb at the waist. Some albs already have the cincture sewn into the alb. The cincture symbolizes chastity and mortification of the senses.

The priest celebrant then places a **stole** over the alb. The stole comes from the imperial days of Rome. Just as the toga indicated citizenship in the Roman Empire, so the long, narrow band of cloth called the stole designated a specific rank and authority within the church community. The priest or bishop wears the stole from the shoulders hanging down the front. The deacon wears the stole from the left shoulder to the right waist.

Next the priest places the **chasuble** over his shoulders. The chasuble is the sleeveless outer liturgical vestment that the priest wears. The word chasuble comes from the Latin word “*casula*” that means “*little house*” because this liturgical garment completely covered the priest. The chasuble is worn over all the other vestments, and is made of silk or some other rich material, usually decorated with Christian symbols. It was patterned after the traveling cloak used by ancient Greeks and Romans. Originally, it was a large circle of cloth, with an opening in the center for the head of the priest. The traditional symbolism of the chasuble is that it represents “*charity covering a multitude of sins.*” Also this liturgical vestment covers the individuality of the priest with the priestly role of the high priest, Jesus Christ.

At solemn Masses, if a Deacon is present, he wears a **dalmatic**. It is an outer liturgical garment with short sleeves, open at the sides and made of the same material and the same liturgical color as the vestments of the celebrant.

The beauty of the vestments should derive from the materials used and the designs on them rather from lavish ornamentation. Representations on the vestments should consist only of sacred symbols, images, or sacred pictures.